Euphresco network for phytosanitary research co-ordination and funding Going Global?

*(Prepared by EPPO)*

Background

Euphresco is an international network of plant health research funders (e.g. ministries) and managers (funding agencies, research institutes). It provides tools and services to ease the exchange of information among national research programmes and to support joint transnational research activities. The 2015 round funded 15 transnational research projects, with total budgets of 3.6 million Euros, from partners in 29 countries across Europe and America. 24 research topics have been short-listed during the current (2016) round of funding and funding commitments will be received before the end of the year.

Euphresco was initiated in 2006 through an EU funding programme for European Research Area Networks (“ERA-nets”) and was initially co-ordinated by the NPPO of one of the EU Member States. Facilitation of co-operation in research was one of the functions set out in the Convention which in 1951 created the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO). It was therefore decided in 2014 that EPPO was the right organisation to host Euphresco as it became a self-sustaining long term network. For the last three years the costs of running Euphresco (including employment of the Co-ordinator) have been covered by annual payments of at least 3000 Euros from each network member. There are currently 35 members of Euphresco across 26 countries, 24 of which are EPPO member countries.

The governance and operation of Euphresco are described in a “modus operandi” which is available from the Euphresco Co-ordinator. The Governing Board is the decision-making body of the Network. It is composed of one representative from each member organisation each having one vote for decision-making purposes. The Governing Board appoints the Network Management Group, the decision-implementing body of the Network. It is composed of 6-8 members which meet several times per year, usually by teleconference, to prepare the decisions to be taken by the Governing Board and ensure that these decisions are properly implemented.

Some members of Euphresco are closely linked to National Plant Protection Organisations in the EPPO region and their representatives on the Euphresco Governing Board are the same people as the member governments’ representatives on EPPO Council. From 2017 all EPPO members will be members of Euphresco, ensuring half the current costs of running the network.

Other Euphresco members are funders and managers of plant health research from different departments or levels of government in the EPPO region, from research institutes, or from countries outside the EPPO region. These members are fully involved in the activities and governance of Euphresco and also contribute through payment of at least 3000€ per year.

Extension of research collaboration around the world

Euphresco is a successful network for international phytosanitary research co-ordination and funding. The benefits of such collaboration are not confined to the EPPO region. North American experts have been involved with Euphresco for many years, and NPPOs from USA and Canada have recently become full members of the network. Proposals for research collaboration were raised recently at the CPM Strategic Planning Group. The paper presented by Australian representatives[[1]](#footnote-1) stated that “Collaboration across nations, institutions, and disciplines, leads to higher quality science, efficiencies of resource use, better outcomes and wider adoption of results. However, these benefits of collaboration only occur where there is mutual interest and alignment of goals, leadership, and support for collaboration (it costs money!).” This accords closely with the experience of Euphresco.

Euphresco can offer two possibilities for more global phytosanitary research collaboration:

i) Euphresco itself continues to grow organically, as new members join, to become a global network using and extending its existing structure, tools and governance arrangements.

ii) Euphresco provides a model from which other regions develop similar networks and a “network of networks” is created for those synergies which can only be realised through truly global collaboration.

The first of these options would be simpler. It can benefit from established and thoroughly tested procedures and infrastructures (e.g. IT and administrative), international visibility and a highly reactive environment. The second option allows for regional particularities (language, plant health priorities, links to RPPOs, FAO regions, and other regional bodies for example).

EPPO feels that the time is right to raise awareness of these possibilities through CPM. Research and science co-ordination was mentioned as a possible topic for future CPM special topic and side sessions by the TCs in 2014 and 2015. We would now like to repeat that request, specifically for a special topic session at CPM 13 on research and science, at which examples of successful collaboration, including Euphresco, could be presented. We would also propose a side session specifically for Euphresco to explain to potential new members around the world the benefits of participation in that network.

Summary

Bringing members from other regions into the network offers strategic benefits to Euphresco through:

* increased long term financial sustainability
* greater credibility when dealing with other initiatives and organisations at global level
* new opportunities for synergies across different regions and disciplines

For new members the benefits of Euphresco membership are, at the strategic level:

* Access to information on national phytosanitary research programmes and projects of Euphresco members
* Information on national research planned or in progress in areas facing similar phytosanitary risks and problems
* Opportunity to shape the future research agenda across the network countries
* Identification of gaps and future needs for resources, infrastructure and skills for phytosanitary research
* Linking the challenges faced by National Plant Protection Organisations and Ministries to the problem solving capabilities of research organisations
* Consultation and collaboration with other research funders to find synergies and complementarities among research programmes

and at the project level:

* Sharing plant health priority problems which can be addressed through research
* Sharing of resources, expertise and infrastructures within projects
* More and better outputs from joint transnational projects than partners could achieve on their own
* Opportunity to carry out research on pests in areas where they already occur, rather than in expensive quarantine facilities
* Development of expertise among researchers through exchanges during transnational projects
* Opportunity for partners to participate in projects according to their capacity
* Flexible and responsive topic call and project initiation tools
* Flexible funding mechanisms to suit the priorities and constraints of members

Obligations of membership

* Following EPPO Council decisions in 2016 at least 2% of the annual contribution of EPPO members to EPPO will be allocated to Euphresco
* For other Euphresco members a minimum subscription will continue to be agreed each year by the Governing Board. This has been 3000€ for the last three years.
* Members share information on their research programmes and needs
* Participation in the governance of Euphresco is through a Governing Board on which all members may be represented, and which appoints a Network Management Group.

Conclusion

The TC-RPPO is invited to:

* *take* note of the activities of the Euphresco network
* *suggest* how phytosanitary research collaboration could be developed across continents, including in the framework of Euphresco
* *propose* that international collaboration on phytosanitary research is included as a special topic session at CPM13, with side sessions available for relevant initiatives to be presented

1. See paper at https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/governance/strategic-planning-group/spg-2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)